



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Marilyn Praisner

For Immediate Release

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PRAISNER INTRODUCES MEASURE TO REQUIRE DEFIBRILLATORS IN COUNTY HEALTH CLUBS

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Councilmember Marilyn Praisner today introduced a Board of Health regulation in the Montgomery County Council that would require all registered health clubs in the County to have at least one defibrillator on hand, and at least one staff member trained to operate it.

The automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, can administer a mild shock to victims of sudden cardiac arrest to keep the heart pumping until trained emergency personnel arrive. The cost of each AED unit ranges from \$1300 to \$2000.

"County residents, especially those over 55 years of age, who exercise strenuously are at particular risk of sudden cardiac arrest," said Councilmember Praisner. "Less than 10 percent of people who suffer cardiac arrest outside a hospital survive – and their chances get worse every moment that defibrillation is delayed.

"This common-sense measure can save lives. AEDs are easily used. They use voice prompts to direct rescuers, monitor heart rhythms, and administer shocks only as necessary."

Councilmember Praisner was joined at her news conference announcing the measure by Wes Pontius, senior vice president of Rio Sport & Health Clubs. That chain recently changed corporate policy to place AEDs in all of their clubs to protect customers.

The County Council serves as the Board of Health to insure public health for County residents. Regulations adopted by the Board of Health apply equally to all municipalities in the County and the support of the County Executive is not required.

There are 126 licensed health clubs in the County, according to the Maryland Attorney General's registry. Eighteen of the County's 29 own recreation centers and pools already have AEDs in place. Councilmember Praisner indicated that she would seek funding in the current budget to place AEDs in the remainder.

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